Magazine Feature Section

HE WEARS A CORSET

This Man's Enormous Earning Power Is Furthered By His Grace Of Figure and Supported By a Public Who Revel In Clever Feminine Imitation

Would you wear corsets for $12,000 a week? No, this question is not addressed to women. It is intended to be answered by the uncorseted sex.

Just offhand you may find it difficult to conceive of any situation where the compressing of your manly form in stays could result in such an income. But the situation has been found and Julian Eltinge, female impersonator and athlete, is filling it to a nicety.

After glancing at this comfortable stipend, any man might be excused for his hesitancy in replying in the negative, especially when it is figured that a season of forty weeks means a sum approximating $500,000. This does not mean that the popular Julian pockets this entire fortune yearly, but his share of it is not to be sneezed at by anyone not burdened with a healthy income.

ABOUT MONEY FIRST.

The avaricious aspect of his endeavors is mentioned early in this story for the simple reason that it forms about the only incentive which urges Eltinge to wear skirts and torture his equator with stays instead of appearing in conventional male attire. Feminine impersonation is to him only a means to an end and that end is the accumulation of a competency and accumulating it quickly. When that competency is attained, the stage will lose Julian Eltinge and his marvelous art, which, although not generally known, is really the revival of a custom as old as the theater itself.

Going back 250 years, to the time of Charles II., when all roles were enacted by men or boys, it is found that the English stage was somewhat scandalized by the importation of a theatrical company from France in which the female roles were actually played by women! Prynne, the Puritan, was so enraged that he styled these actresses as "unwomanish and graceless," not meaning, however, that they were unfeminine or awkward, but that the stage was no place for ladies born in an era of grace.

FIVE CENTURIES AGO.

Another writer of that period, Thomas Braud, recorded that "they were hissed, hooted and pippin-pelted from the stage" and that "all virtuous and well disposed persons in this town were justly offended," although there is evidence that the broader minded among the spectators did not fail to see the propriety of Juliet being represented by one of her own sex rather than by a youth. In this connection it is interesting to note that Shakespeare never saw one of his heroines portrayed by any other than a beardless boy.

Killigrew and Davenant were the first managers given authority, after the return of Charles II., to employ actresses to represent female characters, although these patents were not awarded until the public came to resent the enactment of "women's parts being represented by men in the habits of women."

By 1664 the vocation of the "boy-actress" had altogether passed away, but until the year mentioned, they were essential factors of almost every dramatic performance.

Of the men who became celebrated as interpreters of female characters there were three in Killigrew's company, Hart, Burt and Clun. Hart was Pepy's prime favorite, though Burt and Clun achieved fame in tragic roles both male and female.

As to the real manliness of these players, there is a story that Hart and several other actors in the same line of work fought on the King's side at Edgehill in 1642.

ANOTHER HANDSOME "WOMAN."

Another young actor whose name has been handed down as the handsomest "woman" as well as the handsomest man of his time was Edward Kynaston. The critical Pepy's describes his first glimpse of Knyaston as follows: "Tom and I and my wife went to the theater and there saw 'The Silent Woman.' Among other things here, Kynaston, the boy, had the good turn to appear in three shapes; first, as a poor woman in ordinary clothes to please Moros; then in fine clothes as a gallant—and in them was clearly the prettiest woman in the whole house—and, lastly, as a man—and then, likewise did appear the handsomest man in the house."

Contrasting the earning powers of the impersonators of that day with the only actor of the present time who has succeeded in this art, it is found that Hart and his contemporaries received each about three pounds ($15) weekly, whereas Eltinge's salary and percentage varies anywhere between $3,000 and $5,000 for the same amount of time on the stage.

HOW TIMES CHANGE!

Not since the days of Hart, Burt, Betterton, Clun, Kynaston, Mohun and Nokes has there appeared a masculine interpreter of feminine roles to compare with Julian Eltinge. The present day offers nothing but a horde of hopeless imitators, whose efforts are confined to burlesquing the charms of the fair sex. Eltinge occupies a niche in the Temple of Thespis alone and unrivaled and not of another actor of the day can these words be written. His sustained characterizations in "The Fascinating Widow" and his more amazing artistry as revealed at present in "The Crinoline Girl" have marked him as the one man who has dignified feminine delineation by an art which will endure long after he has laid aside skirts and corsets for all time.

Although Eltinge earns a salary which equals that of the President of the United States, it must not be forgotten that he spends probably as much in a year on clothes as does the President on entertainment. Ever since his first appearance as an impersonator Eltinge realized that his chief stock in trade was his wardrobe.

Immediately he became recognized by the public as a novel entertainer he began to secure himself in the admiration of his followers—75 per cent of which are women—by "plunging" in the gown market. Himself something of a connoisseur of drapery, he was able to design modes which were just a bit more ultra than the most fashionable raiment, and employed the best dressmakers to carry out his ideas.

FIGHTING CRITICISM.

Each year he fortified himself against criticism by trips abroad, and although he began by buying many details of his wardrobe in Paris, he has since come to the realization that the American made dress is better suited to his needs. He found that the gowns, wraps and hats designed in this country invariably elicited greater praise than those imported from across the water. This revelation has resulted in some very timely observations on fashions which are here set forth in his own words.

"I have traveled about this country a great deal during the past few years," he says, "and I have come to the conclusion that an American thrown on his own resources usually rises to the occasion. All the papers now say that we shall have to look to this side of the Atlantic for our feminine styles now that war-stricken France is unable to supply them. Well and good! My prediction is that America will now adopt a style all her own and that by the time the war is over poor Paris will find that she has lost control of women's styles forever."

Minor Detail.

"Great show we're going to put on, my boy," says the impressario to the critic.

"New one?"

"Brand new, and a winner. Four hundred thousand square feet of canvas required for the scenery alone in the first act; $60,000 worth of gold leaf to gild the spears, and——"

"But what——"

"And two thousand separate pieces of properties for the whole show, and nine hundred supers on the stage in the big scene, and——"

"But what——"

"And a ballot of three hundred girls, and six live elephants, two camels, a cage of lions, a horse race, an auto smashup and a steam crane in actual operation, and——"

"But what is the name of the piece?"

"Name of it? O, thunder! I didn't pay any attention to that. We can find that out and hire the actors as soon as we get the dramatic requirements perfected."

How It Worked.

"I hear that your minister introduced quite an unusual idea at the Easter services," says Miggles.

"He did," replies Riggles, "but it didn't succeed. He had all the ladies check their bonnets in the lobby, thinking that this would keep their minds on the services while they were in the pews."

"And did it fail?"

"I should say so. The ladies all staid out in the lobby after their hats were checked, to examine the bonnets at their leisure."

Ledbetter Sugs, the son of Puddiford Sugs, said to have a wonderful future as a railroad man. He has devised a time table with four brand new unsolvable features.

Alfaretta Bingo, who is to graduate this spring, is now suffering from brain fag. She thought for two weeks steadily about how to make her dress.

Once there lived a woman who admitted that her husband was too good for her—but she's been dead several centuries.